



Avian Influenza incident to cause market access suspensions

Despite established scientific evidence that the H7 strain of Avian Influenza (AI) is harmless to human consumption, its' recent detection in birds at a NSW layer producer has resulted in precautionary new and continued international trade suspensions for some poultry and pet food products.

Numerous and widely acknowledged scientific studies¹ have clearly shown that the heat treatment of product during the poultry rendering process destroys any trace of AI. Whilst the NSW Food Authority notes that there are no food safety issues and that poultry and eggs remain safe to eat, all H7 strains of AI are notifiable to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and invariably trade suspensions are imposed by individual countries on some poultry and pet food products.

On 16 October, CSIRO's Australian Animal Health Laboratory at Geelong confirmed the presence of H7 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a flock of layer hens located near Young in NSW. The affected property has been placed under quarantine and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) has provided the requisite notification to the OIE.

In response to this incident, on 16 October the department issued a Market Access Advice² which included the following:

"As a precaution, certification for products to those countries that applied bans [following the incident at Maitland last year] will...be suspended...These suspensions will remain until the trade situation involving those countries has been clarified...The department will take all possible action to minimise the effects of this disease incident on trade and will keep industry informed of further developments."

For almost a year now, Australian rendered poultry products have been suspended from two of the largest export markets, namely China and Indonesia, due to a similar incident in Maitland last November. Since then trade restrictions have still not been lifted in those countries, although following the reclassification of Australia as being free of HPAI in March 2013, and the more recent lodging of detailed risk assessments by the department, it had been hoped that access to these major markets would resume in the coming months.

At this stage, the potential impacts on current year Ridley earnings are not known and will be dependent on the length and breadth of the suspensions.

Ridley will seek to develop its domestic markets and penetrate new markets in unrestricted countries whilst continuing to monitor the situation closely. Ridley will also meet with key government and industry organisations to promote the scientifically unsubstantiated nature of poultry meal export bans related to isolated AI incidents, and endeavour to align the overseas market access responses with the underlying risk profile.

¹ Clemson University Animal Co-Products Research and Education Center (ACREC) and 'Investigation of avian influenza viral ribonucleic acid destruction in poultry co-products under rendering conditions' A. B. Leaphart, T. R. Scott, S. D. Chambers, W. C. Bridges, Jr., and A. K. Greene; J Appl Poult Res 2012 21:719-725

² Australian Government Department of Agriculture Market Access Advice reference MAA1369 issue date 16 October 2013.